National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The NSDUH Report

November 20, 2012

State Estimates of Underage Alcohol Use and Self-Purchase of Alcohol: 2008 to 2010

In Brief

- Combined 2008 to 2010 data indicate that 26.6 percent of persons aged 12 to 20 drank alcohol in the past month
- Rates of underage past month alcohol use were among the lowest in Utah (14.3 percent) and among the highest in Vermont (37.0 percent)
- Approximately 8.7 percent of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank
- The rates of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 buying their own alcohol were among the lowest in New Mexico (2.5 percent), Idaho (2.6 percent), and Oregon (2.6 percent), and among the highest in New York (15.0 percent)

Alcohol use constitutes one of the most serious public health issues for young people in the United States, creating negative health, social, and economic consequences for adolescents, their families, communities, and the Nation as a whole.[1] Reducing access to alcohol is a critical element in the prevention of underage alcohol consumption and is particularly important to the States, which have had authority for alcohol control since 1933. All 50 States and the District of Columbia currently prohibit possession of alcoholic beverages by persons younger than 21, and most prohibit underage purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages.[2] Despite the efforts to limit access, underage drinkers still are able to obtain alcohol, and many are able to purchase alcohol themselves.[3] Information about underage alcohol use at the State level can provide States with vital data to inform enforcement, educational, and prevention efforts.

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks respondents to report on their alcohol use in the past 30 days. Past month alcohol users are asked whether they paid for the last alcoholic beverage that they drank; if they paid for it, they are asked whether they purchased the alcohol beverage themselves or whether they gave someone else the money to buy it for them.

This issue of *The NSDUH Report* presents State estimates of past month alcohol use among persons aged 12 to 20 and State estimates of self-purchase of alcohol among past month drinkers.[4] All findings are annual averages based on combined 2008 to 2010 NSDUH data. This report updates findings from a previously published report which utilized 2006 to 2008 data. State estimates are rank ordered from highest to lowest and divided into quintiles (fifths). States with the highest estimates fall into the top quintile (fifth) and are shown in red; States with the lowest estimates are in the bottom quintile and are shown in blue.[5]

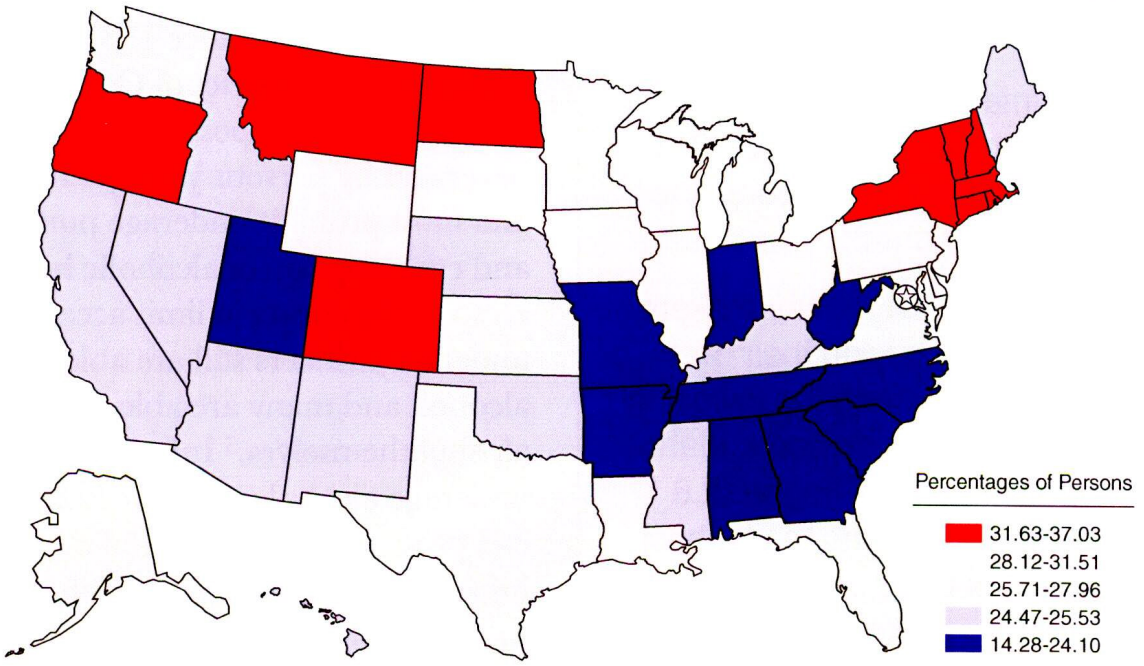
State Estimates of Underage Past Month Alcohol Use

More than one quarter (26.6 percent) of persons aged 12 to 20 drank alcohol in the past month (Table 1). Rates of past month alcohol use were among the lowest in Utah (14.3 percent) and among the highest in Vermont (37.0 percent) (Figure 1). Of the 10 States with the highest rates of past month alcohol use, 6 were in the Northeast (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont). Of the 10 States with the lowest rates of past month alcohol use, 7 were in the South (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia).

State Estimates of Underage Past Month Drinkers Who Purchased the Last Alcohol They Drank

Approximately 8.7 percent of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank (Table 1). The rates of past month

Figure 1. Percentages of Past Month Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 12 to 20, by State: 2008 to 2010



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012).

drinkers aged 12 to 20 buying their own alcohol were among the lowest in New Mexico (2.5 percent), Idaho (2.6 percent), and Oregon (2.6 percent), and among the highest in New York (15.0 percent) (Figure 2). Six of the States in the top quintile were in the South (Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia). Six of the States in the bottom quintile were in the West (Alaska, Idaho, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming).

Discussion

Underage drinking is a serious and persistent problem in the United States. Although there is wide variation in underage drinking and self-purchase of alcohol by underage drinkers among States, no State is immune from these problems. Highlighting the prevalence of these problems in each State can help Federal, State, and local policy makers plan for and allocate resources to combat underage drinking, including efforts to reduce the availability of alcohol to young people, raise awareness about underage drinking and its consequences, and develop effective approaches to prevent underage drinking.

End Notes

[1] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2006, January). *A comprehensive plan for preventing and reducing underage drinking* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 01-3517). Rockville, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/pdf/underagerpttocongress.pdf

[2] Alcohol Policy Information System, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2009, September 28). *State profiles of underage drinking laws*. Retrieved from http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/state_profiles_of_underage_drinking_laws.html

[3] Pemberton, M. R., Colliver, J. D., Robbins, T. M., & Gfroerer, J. C. (2008). *Underage alcohol use: Findings from the 2002-2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 08-4333, Analytic Series A-30). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. Retrieved from http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Underage-Alcohol-Use-Findings-from-the-2002-2006-National-Surveys-on-Drug-Use-and-Health-NSDUH-/SMA08-4333

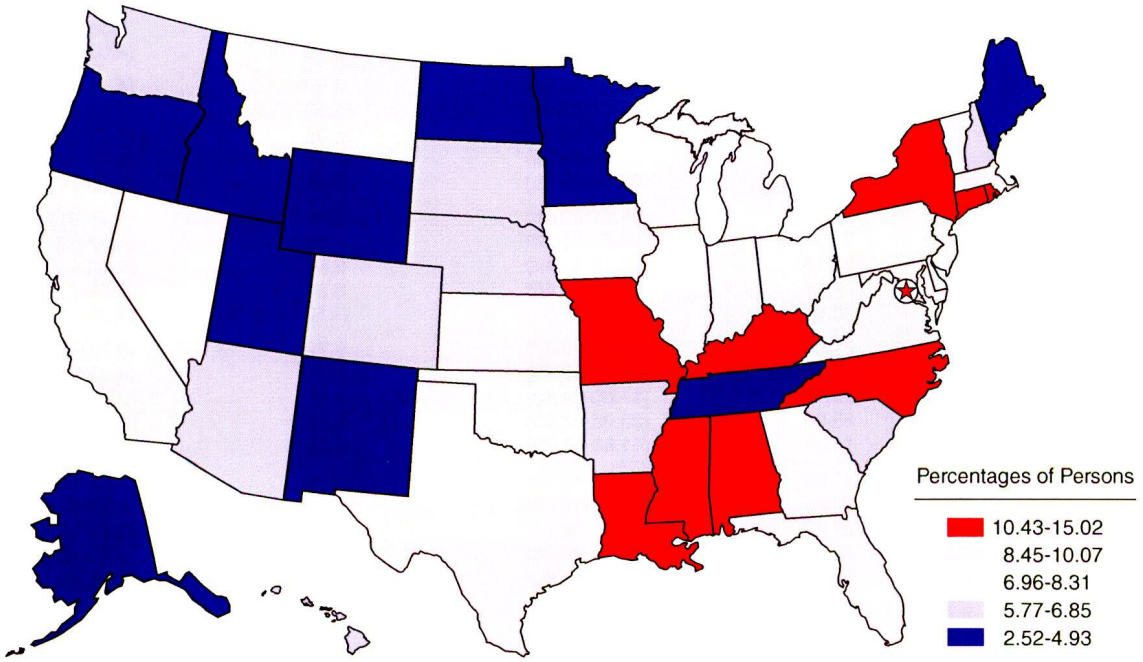
[4] This report uses State estimates based solely on the weighted sample for each State (i.e., direct State estimates) and does not use the small area estimation (SAE) methodology. Therefore, estimates in this report should not be compared with any previous NSDUH reports that use the SAE methodology.

[5] Estimates were divided into quintiles for ease of presentation and discussion, but differences between States and quintiles were not tested for statistical significance. In some instances, more than 10 or fewer than 10 States were assigned to each quintile because of ties in the estimated prevalence rates.

Suggested Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (November 20, 2012). *The NSDUH Report: State Estimates of Underage Alcohol Use and Self-Purchase of Alcohol: 2008 to 2010.* Rockville, MD.

Figure 2. Percentages of Past Month Drinkers Aged 12 to 20 Who Purchased Their Own Alcohol the Last Time They Drank, by State: 2008 to 2010



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012).

Table 1. Past Month Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 12 to 20 and Self-Purchase of the Last Alcohol Used among Past Month Alcohol Users Aged 12 to 20: Percentages and Confidence Intervals of Percentages, Average of 2008, 2009, and 2010

	Past Month Alcohol Users among Persons Aged 12 to 20		Past Month Underage Drinkers Who Themselves Purchased Last Alcohol They Used	
State	Percentage	95% Confidence Interval	Percentage	95% Confidence Interval
Total United States	**26.60**	**(26.10-27.12)**	**8.75**	**(8.23-9.29)**
Alabama	21.96	(18.71-25.59)	10.77	(7.29-15.64)
Alaska	25.77	(22.48-29.35)	4.64	(2.52-8.41)
Arizona	24.79	(21.22-28.76)	5.84	(3.30-10.13)
Arkansas	22.74	(20.07-25.65)	6.85	(4.27-10.80)
California	25.23	(23.54-26.99)	7.67	(5.95-9.82)
Colorado	32.65	(29.43-36.05)	6.16	(3.45-10.76)
Connecticut	32.13	(27.44-37.21)	12.67	(8.51-18.43)
Delaware	31.48	(27.88-35.32)	7.34	(4.50-11.74)
District of Columbia	27.96	(23.10-33.41)	11.24	(5.94-20.28)
Florida	26.19	(24.36-28.10)	9.93	(7.70-12.71)
Georgia	24.10	(20.32-28.33)	9.06	(5.65-14.22)
Hawaii	25.28	(21.23-29.80)	5.91	(2.74-12.26)
Idaho	24.83	(21.16-28.90)	2.57	(1.14-5.68)
Illinois	28.12	(26.28-30.03)	8.52	(6.74-10.72)
Indiana	22.52	(20.27-24.95)	7.31	(4.14-12.57)
Iowa	30.20	(25.33-35.55)	9.84	(6.73-14.18)
Kansas	27.91	(23.79-32.44)	9.16	(6.26-13.23)
Kentucky	24.47	(20.38-29.08)	10.53	(6.79-15.97)
Louisiana	29.48	(26.01-33.21)	13.95	(10.34-18.57)
Maine	25.53	(21.81-29.64)	4.46	(2.36-8.27)
Maryland	25.98	(22.68-29.58)	9.44	(6.37-13.78)
Massachusetts	31.86	(27.58-36.47)	10.07	(6.85-14.57)
Michigan	26.06	(24.67-27.51)	8.45	(6.85-10.40)
Minnesota	26.89	(22.42-31.89)	4.93	(2.61-9.12)
Mississippi	24.48	(20.84-28.52)	10.88	(7.87-14.86)
Missouri	24.03	(20.98-27.37)	10.43	(5.96-17.60)
Montana	34.84	(31.29-38.57)	6.96	(4.87-9.87)
Nebraska	24.70	(21.12-28.67)	5.77	(3.37-9.69)
Nevada	24.53	(21.20-28.21)	9.43	(5.54-15.61)
New Hampshire	35.68	(31.65-39.93)	6.15	(4.06-9.23)
New Jersey	28.12	(24.07-32.56)	6.98	(4.41-10.86)
New Mexico	25.52	(22.76-28.48)	2.52	(0.93-6.63)
New York	31.63	(29.94-33.37)	15.02	(12.70-17.68)
North Carolina	22.95	(20.08-26.09)	12.94	(8.78-18.67)
North Dakota	35.35	(32.06-38.79)	4.67	(2.78-7.74)
Ohio	28.15	(25.51-30.95)	7.44	(6.11-9.03)
Oklahoma	25.31	(22.43-28.42)	8.09	(4.97-12.90)
Oregon	32.15	(28.16-36.42)	2.57	(1.38-4.76)
Pennsylvania	29.11	(26.88-31.45)	6.99	(5.25-9.27)
Rhode Island	33.95	(29.39-38.83)	11.17	(7.05-17.24)
South Carolina	21.68	(18.03-25.84)	6.72	(3.71-11.86)
South Dakota	31.51	(27.55-35.75)	6.31	(4.03-9.74)
Tennessee	20.50	(17.00-24.50)	3.89	(2.01-7.37)
Texas	25.90	(23.95-27.96)	9.52	(7.68-11.74)
Utah	14.28	(11.65-17.39)	3.23	(1.13-8.90)
Vermont	37.03	(31.62-42.79)	7.19	(5.06-10.12)
Virginia	27.23	(22.51-32.52)	7.05	(4.03-12.04)
Washington	25.71	(22.56-29.14)	6.12	(3.63-10.14)
West Virginia	23.23	(20.44-26.28)	8.31	(5.11-13.23)
Wisconsin	29.39	(25.65-33.42)	9.76	(6.14-15.18)
Wyoming	29.72	(26.47-33.20)	4.16	(2.31-7.36)

Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012).

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Findings from SAMHSA's 2008 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2008 to 2010 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 93,700 persons aged 12 to 20. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

The NSDUH Report is prepared by the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ), SAMHSA, and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.)

Information on the most recent NSDUH is available in the following publication:

Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2011). *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of national findings* (NSDUH Series H-41, HHS Publication No. SMA 11-4658). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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